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Thematic Quranic Translation Series, Installment 10
(IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE)

The Tale of Prophet Job (Ayyub a.s.)

Recovered from the dark confines of mythology
And rehabilitated in the true light of Quran

PRELUDE

The Reality behind frivolous details of awful improbable diseases, protracted chain of inexplicable afflictions and misery and, in the face thereof, the exemplary patience and fortitude displayed by Ayyub a.s. (Prophet Job).

According to traditional details derived from the Bibles, the Prophet Job had to undergo unaccountable misery and affliction due to intervention of Lucifer in his life. And thus he was reduced to a miserable living of poverty, hunger, diseases and unaccountable distress in spite of his earlier position of affluence and power as head of a prominent tribe. He is reported to have lost all relatives and servants, and was left fully incapacitated with only a wife to take care of him. Different exegeses of Quran have shown him to have been afflicted by a variety of physical disasters. One of these caused him to suffer from sores all over his body filled with puss, and due to continued secretions he was obliged to lie down in the open on a bed of sand or ashes. His poor wife being the only attendant, fanned his afflicted body to move flies and insects away from him. She also labored in peoples' homes to scratch a living for herself and husband. One of the interpreters went so far as to have him bitten by a venomous snake, following the lead from Bibles where the Devil is given the name of serpent. After long years, when his patience came to its end, he

called upon his Lord. The Lord then came to his rescue and put an end to his painful trials. A kick from his foot caused a spring to flow out of the ground. The water from this source worked as a remedy for all his physical diseases and distress. (The effects of snake bite that had afflicted him for years were also cured). Then he was joined by his lost family and relatives, regained health, wealth and prominence. He lived to be 140 years' old and saw four next generations of his offspring. During the miserable times his lone faithful wife was forced by Devil to say something disturbing to him. Upon this, he vowed to punish her with 100 lashes when his ordeal ended. But then God saved his wife from this cruel sentence by proposing to replace the lashes with a dried bunch of bush tied in a knot, and to be stricken only once. Please check the available interpretations for this amazing episode of childish fantasy and mythical fabrications.

It is a strange and regrettable fact that no such imaginary fabrications are to be noted on the pages of Quran, and these are obviously planted in its translations or interpretations by copying from the Bibles in a superfluous manner. The sole purpose behind this imagery was to hide the revolutionary struggle of Prophet Job against the powerful tyrants of his time for the rehabilitation of human rights.

Hence, instead of mourning the level of intellect of our learned translators/interpreters, or the malicious agenda they were given to follow, let us try by ourselves to work out a most rational and authentic translation of related Verses. Let us try to present with full authority just as much as Quran has elucidated on this issue, without adding a single word from outer sources, so that the reality hidden behind the ancient myth can be fully brought to light. Hopefully this effort would culminate in a comprehensive exposition which would not need any further elaboration than the actual words of Quran.

Verse 21/83-84:

٢١/٨٣ : وَأَيُّوبَ إِذْ نَادَىٰ رَبَّهُ أَنِّي مَسَّنِيَ الضُّرُّ وَأَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾

“AND remember Ayyub, when he cried out to his Sustainer, “O Lord I have fallen into great harm/hardship in the fulfillment of my mission but I believe in you as the best provider of mercy and protection.”

٢١/٨٤ : فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ فَكَشَفْنَا مَا بِهِ مِنْ ضُرٍّ ۖ وَآتَيْنَاهُ أَهْلَهُ وَمِثْلَهُمْ مَعَهُمْ رَحْمَةً مِنَّا وَذِكْرَىٰ لِلْعَابِدِينَ ﴿٨٤﴾

“Whereupon We responded unto him and removed all the difficulties/setbacks that he had sustained; and We made him join with his comrades and companions, and with many more of the same faith. It was a merciful provision for him from us, and a remembrance for our obedient servants”.

Verse 38/41-44:

٣٨/٤١ : وَادْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا أَيُّوبَ إِذْ نَادَىٰ رَبَّهُ أَنِّي مَسَّنِيَ الشَّيْطَانُ بِنُصْبٍ وَعَذَابٍ ﴿٤١﴾

“AND remember our servant Ayyub when he called unto his Sustainer, “Behold, the corrupt Rebellious one (الشَّيْطَانُ) has afflicted me with torture (عَذَابٍ) in a frenzy of enmity and confrontation (بِنُصْبٍ)”.

٣٨/٤٢ : ارْكُضْ بِرِجْلِكَ هَذَا مُغْتَسَلٌ بَارِدٌ وَشَرَابٌ ﴿٤٢﴾

“We ordered him to take quick steps in moving away from that community. And suggested to him a station where opportunities were available for cleansing people’s hearts towards purity (مُغْتَسَلٌ), cooling of eyes (بَارِدٌ) in the light of divine revelation and following a righteous mode of conduct (شَرَابٌ)”.

٣٨/٤٣ : وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ أَهْلَهُ وَمِثْلَهُم مَّعَهُمْ رَحْمَةً مِنَّا وَذِكْرَىٰ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿٤٣﴾

“And there We bestowed him with his old ideological companions and many more having the same faith. It was our special favor for him; similarly, therein was a remembrance for all those with wisdom and intellect”.

٣٨/٤٤ : وَخُذْ بِيَدِكَ ضِغْثًا فَاضْرِبْ بِهِ وَلَا تَحْنُتْ ۖ إِنَّا وَجَدْنَاهُ صَابِرًا ۖ نِعْمَ الْعَبْدُ ۖ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ ﴿٤٤﴾

“Then we ordered him to consolidate his power (ضِغْثًا) by exercising his energy and talents (بِيَدِكَ); and then to set out (اضْرِبْ) for spreading his revolutionary message in such a way as not violating a treaty, oath, covenant or principle (وَلَا تَحْنُتْ). Indeed we found him steadfast in his mission. He was an excellent servant of ours; He would always turn unto Us in times of need”.

Dear friends, that's all there is to it. Prophet Ayyub's short episode does not suggest personal, physical or financial problems of a Divine Envoy, as the case goes with the scriptural biographies of all other holy men. They come to reform the societies by confronting the tyrants of the time and thus to establish precedents for the coming generations of humans to follow. And the Scriptures only give hints towards their revolutionary struggles aimed at freeing the common humans from servile bonds and exploitation inflicted upon the majority of them by a minority of powerful ruling classes.